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ABSTRACT

A case for inservice training programs for language teachers in public schools is developed in this paper. Key reasons showing the need for such programs focus on: the new teacher involved in team teaching, independent study programs, and individualized instruction; social and educational change; program articulation and coordination; and teacher morale. The nature of inservice training, financial support, and administrative responsibility are also examined. (RL)

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IN-SERVICE TRAINING: OPPORTUNITY AND OBLIGATION

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Everyone in education today has accepted as a long range objective fostering in the student a desire to learn, an inner-directedness toward the acquisition of knowledge that will keep him an active learner all his life so that he can meet the challenge of change. Teachers, principals, superintendents, supervisors, professors, State Department of Public Instruction personnel, officers of professional organizations, Office of Education staff - all espouse the promotion of learners toward this goal. But who are the learners? The students in school? Pre-schoolers? Primary, middle, junior or senior high schoolers? Undergraduate and graduate students? Yes, all those previously listed, and, in addition, all those who wish to be effective in whatever vocation they choose to follow during life. Those of us who chose foreign language teaching are certainly in the last group.

At a time when educational institutions are encountering serious financial problems, enrollments in foreign languages are declining, foreign language requirements for entrance into college and as degree requirements are being reconsidered, reduced or even eliminated, it is especially timely that we discuss in-service education. With the scarcity of funds, elective subjects in slight demand will be among the first course offerings eliminated as will teachers of those subjects who are considered unproductive. From the standpoint of administration, it is difficult to justify financially the offering of a course that has an enrollment below thirty.

Teachers will blame guidance counselors and administrators for the loss of enrollment in foreign language courses and the reduction or elimination of foreign language offerings. Perhaps, in some instances, this censure is warranted. A counselor may have failed a course in foreign language and, as a result, allow

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his personal feeling to influence his guidance of a student. Or an administrator may never have studied a foreign language and lack the understanding of the value such study may have for students as groups or individuals. In most cases, however, the person who sells the foreign language course or program of study is the teacher.

If the teacher, then, is the single most important factor in foreign language or any other type of instruction, perhaps the solution to having an excellent instructional staff and flourishing departments in every subject, especially foreign languages, would be the employment of carefully screened, recently graduated teacher candidates who had excellent pre-service education. This resolution of the problem would hardly be feasible or desirable, as is patently evident. Therefore, in-service education, which differs from pre-service only in time and sequence, becomes a necessity for the following reasons (1):

1. Pre-service preparation of professional staff members is rarely ideal and may be primarily an introduction to professional preparation rather than professional preparation as such. For example, how many beginning teachers are prepared to participate in team teaching, guide independent study, individualize instruction?
2. Social and educational change makes current professional practices obsolete or relatively ineffective in a very short period of time. This applies to methods and techniques, tools and substantive knowledge itself. When society determined that proficiency in oral as well as written communication was desirable behavior for foreign language students, how many teachers were ready to reserve translation for those students for whom it was worthwhile? How many jumped on the bandwagon with new materials and equipment with or without adequate training?

3. Coordination and articulation of instructional practices require change in people. Even when each instructional staff member is functioning at a highly professional level, employing an optimum number of the most effective practices, such an instructional program might still be relatively uncoordinated from subject to subject and poorly articulated from year to year. Teachers will often do what some textbook authors have done, for instance. In the beginning of the language program, the emphasis is on learning to comprehend the spoken word, to speak with a limited command of vocabulary and structures so as to be understood by a native or near native speaker, to read using voabulary and structures carefully controlled to prevent frustration and discouragement of the student encountering enough unfamiliar vocabulary and structure items to impede comprehension. Then, at the second level, after such careful nurturing, the student is plunged into relatively lengthy readings abounding in unfamiliar vocabulary and structures. And at level three, the student is judged to be ready to cope with literary selctions. Thereby, the expectations seem to be that the language development of a student learning a foreign language can telescope into three years the acquisition of the skills and exhibit the behavior of a student after ten years of schooling and thirteen or fourteen years of learning his native language.

4. Other factors argue for in-service education activities of rather diverse kinds. Morale can be stimulated and maintained through in-service education, and is a contribution to instruction in itself, even if instructional improvement of any kind does not

> occur. In-service education exists because someone believes enough in the participants' capability to improve. If a leader believes that of the teachers and the teachers feel that confidence in them exists, they will come to believe in themselves and their capabilities. Generally, then, as with the children in PYGMALION IN THE CLASSROOM (2), they will fulfill the expectations of the leader.

What is in-service education? Who provides or should provide it? On whom does it place an obligation? For whom is it an opportunity?

Let's address ouselves to the first question and define in-service education. In this paper as well as the literature since the 1957 publication of the National Society for the Study of Education's Yearbook entitled INSERVICE EDUCATION, in-service education has been defined as planned activities for the instructional improvement of professional staff members (1) in contrast to various activities in which teachers and others might independently engage in order to improve themselves - wide and selective reading, work-related travel, attendance at meetings and conventions of professional organizations, advanced course study, or anything else that teachers or administrators feel is conducive to professional growth (3). This definition does not denigrate in any way the efforts of the individual to improve or the quality of pre-service preparation. Even if these informal activities and formal course of study were optimum, the demands being made upon schools and school personnel today to provide maximum educational opportunity for each student at the least cost necessitate planned programs in in-service education.

Who provides or should provide in-service education for professional staff? Federally-supported NDEA and EPDA Institutes and state-sponsored workshops over a period of years attempted to tell teachers and supervisors how to improve their

instruction rapidly. These training programs were usually developed by college and university staff who deemed they knew what was instructionally best for the public and private schools. Courses of the same type began to be offered by colleges and universities, again with the college or university staff determining the curriculum, but, in this instance, at the expense of the course participant. And, finally, the professional organizations have recognized the need for in-service education and are offering pre-conference or convention workshops at the expense of the participants in addition to problem-solving sessions or clinics.

The ineffectiveness of all the above attempts to provide in-service training for foreign language teachers or staff concerned with foreign language instruction lies not in the financing of those activities but in the fact that the participants do not identify the instructional or other problems on which they work, they do not decide upon ways and means for attacking these problems, they often feel that they are working in an atmosphere unconducive to mutual support and permissiveness, they find that simple, in-service programs designed for uniform participation cannot suffice when variations of interests and needs within the group are great. How often have we heard fellow conferees say that they came to a meeting or workshop with a problem and were going home with it, too? How often have we heard colleagues say that a session or entire conference was a waste of time? How often have we heard in passing the remark of a participant that he learned more from talking with another participant over coffee or a cigarette than from four days of meetings?

Who then should provide in-service education? With the exception of area conferences held on a regular basis by schools with similar interests and needs that have been identified and addressed in sessions planned by the participants, such as the area conferences of language teachers in Northwestern Indiana, the answer

must be the school system. Teachers, administrators, and supervisors accept the axiom that "Schools exist for the purpose of providing effective instruction." But for whom? The budget, the calendar of supervisory, administrative and instructional staff activities reveal that whereas most of the personnel and funds of the public schools are devoted to teaching and support services most school systems give little more than lip service to the upgrading of instructional personnel (1). In their cost-effectiveness studies, apparently the input by the school system of effective in-service training programs for instructional staff to achieve the output of instructional progress of the students has been overlooked by those who determine the priorities of the budget expenditures. Furthermore, with financial difficulties plaguing more and more school systems, this item will probably be reduced or even eliminated unless the method of financing schools is improved.

To pursue that same line of thinking, how does the staff in a small system or individual school have the opportunity for in-service training? If it is financially inadvisable to provide instruction for fewer than 20 or 30 pupils in a class, certainly it would be deemed financially inadvisable to provide in-service training for small groups of teachers when consultants, materials, equipment, or released time would be needed, would it not? Perhaps, in such cases, the Office of Education, State Departments of Public Instruction, professional organizations, or larger nearby school systems could provide the help needed. The drawbacks of such a method of operation are the chances of having a consultant who does not know the needs and of having enough continuity in in-service sessions or having enough of them with activities appropriate for the purposes to be achieved, the certainty of the absence of aid and support as changes resulting from in-service are implemented, and, in most instances, the lack of involvement of high status personnel.

It is reported by Wendell Wolfe, for example, that the participant's mastery of concepts presented in a year-long in-service program was positively related to the superintendent's or curriculum director's attendance at in-service sessions (4).

If the conclusion is that it is the school or school system's obligation to provide or arrange for the provision of in-service training, what is the obligation of the teacher? Most teachers groan when they hear the word "in-service" mentioned. And when their worst fears are confirmed and a scheduled program of in-service education is announced, they begin to exert their ingenuity to devise ways of escaping the impending torture of participation.

What would happen if instructional staff acquired another viewpoint? What if they realized that life is change and schools, teaching, and instruction as part of their life are no exceptions? What if they realized that they through in-service education can determine and effect change since in-service education is such a process? Could they not begin to view in-service education as an opportunity - an opportunity for them to become involved in making things happen instead of being victims of change?

Could schools and school-systems, after reviewing the results obtained in federal, state, or foundation funded programs in which a strong in-service component was operative and included as a substantial budget item, consider it a necessity to make provision for such growth opportunities for their professional staff?

It seems most likely that both the above changes could be effected, but, if they can, the challenge to the profession will be to provide the leaders and resource people for schools and teachers to insure effective in-service programs.

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